S. MENDELSOHN

THE POLISH JEWS BEHIND THE NAZI GHETTO WALLS

Ghetto Wall in Warsaw, Erected by Nazi Order

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This paper was read before the sixteenth annual conference of the Yiddish Scientific Institute on January 11, 1942. The author, a well-known public leader in pre-war Warsaw, and a member of the Executive Board of this Institute, did not intend to discuss any major issues of the war, even as far as the Jews themselves are concerned. He simply presented a survey of facts on Jewish everyday life under Nazi domination.

The paper was delivered in Yiddish and, simultaneously with this translation, is being published in the *Yivo Bleter,* Journal of the Yiddish Scientific Institute, XIX, 1 (January-February, 1942).

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I shall not include in my paper any item concerning the ghettos in the provinces which the Germany army has occupied in the course of the Russo-German war. As regards those territories, no material published thus far may be considered substantiated. I shall speak only of that part of Poland which has been under German rule prior to June 22, 1941.

A word of introduction should be said about the sources. For three reasons it is not easy to picture what Jewish life *actually* is like in the ghetto, namely:

(1) Scarcity of material. During the first months of occupation one could still leave Poland for a large sum; in Summer 1940 leaving the Government General was prohibited altogether. The Nazi censorship, like the whole regime, is merciless. It is very difficult, even in a cryptic manner, to communicate in private letters any more details than the Nazi censor would permit. Even foreigners, citizens of neutral countries—non-Jews—are not admitted to the area of the Government General. Those few correspondents who did get into a town where Jews were living in a ghetto only saw as much as they were shown. They never saw real life.

The most important source of information is the Cracow newspaper *Gazeta Żydowska.* Until a short time ago it was published three times a week and contained some meager four or six pages. It bore the mark of ruthless censorship. Nevertheless, it gave many bits of information which, when brought together, create something of a picture of Jewish life in Nazified Poland. Of course not only local news, articles and even advertisements have to be examined, but it is also necessary to read between the lines.

Private letters are another source. Something *can* be learned from them.

The third source are reports from the underground movement. In this paper, only a small part of the reports can be made use of because of their confidential nature.

(2) Much is written about the ghetto in the press. There is really no cruelty with which the Nazis are charged that would not sound plausible. Thus, not each item reported is accurately checked by the

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correspondents. But it seems to me that every exaggeration is blasphemy in the face of the tragedy which our people is experiencing. Consequently, I have not included many facts which appeared in the daily press.

(3) The third difficulty is a purely psychological one. We all are too shamefully at ease to be able to conceive the ghetto vividly enough, to choke with its stuffiness, or to sense on our arms the burning yellow badge.

Taking these obstacles into consideration, and fully cognizant of the great responsibility of presenting here that blend of suffering and heroism that is called ghetto, I shall try to relate in simple words, to the best of my ability, how the Jews are living behind the walls in Nazi controlled Poland.

Establishment of the Ghetto

The first attempt to establish a ghetto was made by the German authorities on October 28, 1939.

On that day a lieutenant of the Gestapo appeared in the building of the *Kehile* [Jewish Community Council] in Warsaw at 26 Grzybowska. It was on Friday at 4 p. m. Seventeen members of the Council were present in the session room. The lieutenant ordered all 24 members together with their alternates to be there within half an hour. He warned of the heaviest punishments for all if anyone were missing. Meanwhile, he took the president of the Council, Mr. Czerniakow, into a separate room, and told him that the Community Council itself was to proclaim and execute the moving into the ghetto within three days. After half an hour he returned. He arranged the 48 people in double file, announced the ghetto decree to them and added that he was taking the 24 alternates with him as hostages, and that they would be shot if the decree were not complied with. Moreover, the 24 Council members would share the same fate.

After his departure the leaders of the Community Council decided to hold a meeting at 8 a. m. on Saturday. I prefer not to go into the details of that historical meeting. It lasted for almost twelve hours. The 24 people felt their responsibility to our generation and to the generations to come. The Council swayed between firmness and the realization that the sacrifice of their own lives would not spare the Jewish community the terrible ordeal of the ghetto. The motion of

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the workers' representative to refuse to carry out the order and to take all consequences was seconded by the representative of the Artisans' Association. The other members held that the Jewish population might have to pay dearly for such resistance. It was agreed to send a delegation to the military authorities.

It is utterly beyond my power to describe the reaction of the Jewish population to this portentous news. Thousands of Jews gathered in the yard of the Community Council. They were waiting for directions, for a word of comfort. Because of an unexpected disagreement between the military and the Gestapo, the Council succeeded in having the decree postponed originally for a few days, then almost for a whole year. Some day this Saturday and Sunday will become the subject of an epic. In those days of strain the power of resistance of the Jewish population was mobilized.

A year later, when the attempt to establish the Lublin "reservation", a sort of huge concentration camp, had failed, the Nazis started actually to carry out the ghetto decree. During the first half of October, Warsaw Jews were banned from entering Adolf Hitlerplatz (Plac Piłsudskiego) and from using Siegesstrasse (Aleje Ujazdowskie). A fine of 1,000 zlotys or imprisonment of up to 3 months would follow violations. In the latter half of October, 1940, the following announcement was issued in Warsaw:

> According to the order of the District Chief, it is necessary, to avoid epidemics, to establish secluded Jewish quarters within the Warsaw area. [Here the limits of the Warsaw ghetto are specified.[1]] Poles who live in the Jewish quarters, as well as Jews who live outside them, must leave their apartments by October 31, 1940. Poles who move before that date are entitled to choose new apartments. Jews will be provided with quarters by the *Judenrat.* After October 31, 1940, evacuation will be forced.

The deadline was later extended to November 15, 1940. By that time 140 thousand Jews who had lived outside the limits of

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[1] The area designated to the Jews as a ghetto in Warsaw was cut down several times. The map carried by the *Gazeta Żydowska* in Number 12 of August 31, 1940, shows the limits going as far as Chmielna to the south and Marszałkowska to the east, while a new street has been laid through the Ogród Saski for the Jews' sake. The decree of October 16, 1940, made public in the *Warschauer Zeitung* of October 18, specified a much smaller area, and on October 21 another segment was cut off at the western limit of the ghetto.

A map of the ghetto, according to the decrees of October 16 and 21, as well as a complete list of the streets assigned to the Jews, were published in the *Yivo Bleter,* Volume XVI, Number 2 (November-December 1940), pp. 200-201.

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Another Section of the Ghetto Wall in Warsaw

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the ghetto were forced to abandon their homes. Converted Jews also had to move in.

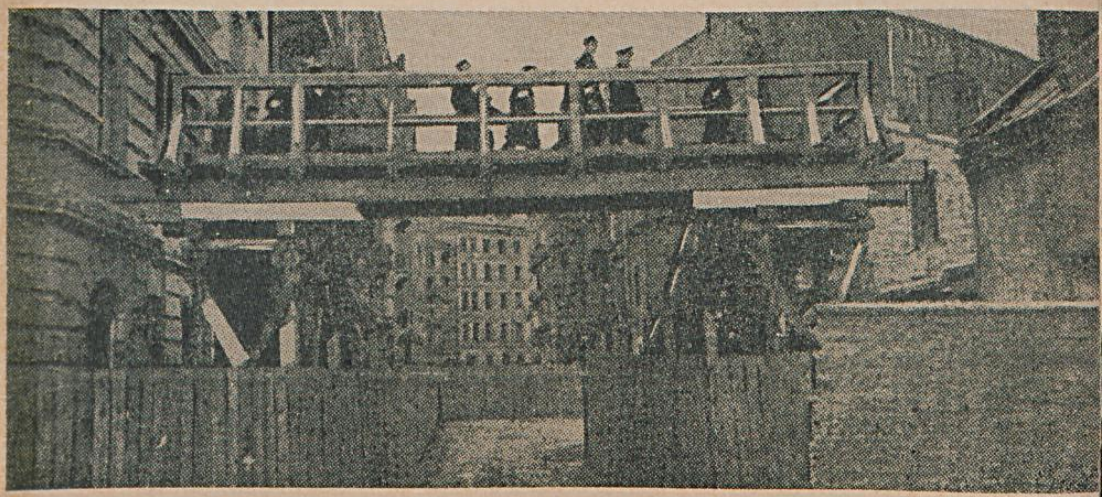
The ghetto is surrounded by walls which are thick, though not very high. Along the walls ditches have been dug and filled with barbed wire or water. The gates of the ghetto are guarded by a Jewish policeman on one side and by a German on the other. The regulations for entering and leaving the ghetto are constantly being tightened. At first violators were only fined, later they were imprisoned, then they were placed in a concentration camp. Now there are localities where leaving the ghetto is punishable by death.

The German police has orders to shoot on sight any Pole who will approach the ghetto walls to within 50 meters [164 feet]. Electrically charged wires have been placed around the ghetto walls in Warsaw, Lublin and other localities. May I commemorate here the first eight Jews, including six women, who have been shot on orders of Governor General Frank for leaving the ghetto: Joseph Pajkus, Motl Fiszbojm, Sara Pasztejn, Rywka Klingerman, Lidia Gans, Fejga Margules, Dwojra Rozenberg and Chana Zajdenworem.

Poles who conceal Jews in their homes are also liable to capital punishment.

Warsaw was not the first city to have a ghetto; earlier, Jewish quarters had been set apart in Lodz, Łowicz, and some other towns. We know little about the internal life of the ghetto in Lodz. After Warsaw, ghettos were established in a number of localities. At present we know for certain about ghettos in the following places: Warsaw, Otwock (a community of about 6,000 Jews, where the ghetto is divided into three parts in separate districts of the town and one

A Wooden Bridge in Warsaw for Jews to Cross a Street That Does Not Belong to the Ghetto



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part can communicate with the others only by telephone); Cracow (where only 12,000 of the former 60,000 Jews are left); Lublin (which had approximately 40,000 Jews before the war; today, it is reported, the number reaches 70,000 and this ghetto is the worst as to sanitation, is smallest in size and most terrible in the hideous methods which the Nazis apply); Radomsko (with a Jewish population of more than 8,000); moreover, we know of a number of ghettos in smaller towns. Altogether there are reports of 26 places where ghettos have been established. Perhaps these are not all. There is very good reason to believe that many ghettos have been completely isolated and that their faint voices do not reach us.

We are still in the dark as to actual numbers, but on the basis of reliable reports we may assume that up to date almost one and a half million Jews have been penned into ghettos, excluding those in the territories which have been seized from the Soviet Union since June 22, 1941. In addition, it is learned (for example, from the decree of the Warsaw Governor Fischer of June 17, 1940) that in localities where no formal ghetto exists Jews are also prohibited from leaving their township without written permission. Altogether there were, according to the Nazi estimate of July 1, 1941, 1,700,000 Jews in the area of the Government General.[2]

Density of Population

No accurate information is available as to the density of the population of the ghetto. However, the scant data that reach us cut into our hearts. In the ghetto of Warsaw there now live half a million Jews, and perhaps a score of thousands more. (Originally there were only 360,000, but now the population has increased because of the expulsions from other towns.) The Warsaw Community Council resolved that a small room with one window must be occupied by at least 3½ persons. This decision was posted on the streets. There is evidence at hand that the density of population has already reached the high of 10-12 persons per room. Thousands of people, even in freezing weather, sleep on staircases or courtyards. Still worse are reports from Lodz, where nearly 200,000 Jews[3] were assigned a very small area in the poorest district of the city—Bałuty.

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[2] See the aforesaid issue of the *Yivo Bleter*, pp. 202-203.

[3] A number of "about 200,000 Jews" is given for Lodz in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* of August 15, 1941.

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On July 18, 1940, the S. A. leader in Warsaw, Kommandant Leist, banned Jews from entering public parks or squares; this ban was not to be effective in streets or quarters which were in danger of contagious disease. The ghetto was robbed of all gardens, of all plants. A special branch of the *Judenräte* now encourages the setting of shrubs in the yards, of plants on the balconies.

From Lublin, pictures have appeared in various German tabloids, showing hundreds of people, including women, aged and children, sleeping, while rain was pouring down, on the stairs of synagogues turned into homes for the unfortunate. The Nazi reporters add obscene comments to such pictures. One can imagine what things are like in smaller localities.

Health Conditions

The primary object of the Nazis is physical extermination. The three tools of murder are starvation, epidemics and cold. As mentioned, the Nazis try to convey the impression that epidemics were the reason for isolating the Jews. But when the ghettos were decreed, the sick rate was comparatively low. On the contrary—epidemic diseases increased with the establishment of the ghetto. We have no statistics of the typhus epidemic; we only know that it rages incessantly throughout the year. And no wonder—starved and emaciated bodies, hell-like living conditions favor typhus like nothing else. There are also reports of an enormous rise of the number of tuberculosis victims. Diphtheria among children is still another affliction. For a long time the Nazis authorities would give no serum for anti-diphtheria injections to Jews. The OZE[4] endeavored to ship some amounts of serum, but to no effect, for the Nazis would not allow such "luxuries" for the Jewish population.

Remember also that nearly all Jewish hospitals have been seized by the Nazis in the ghetto cities and towns. For example, the Jewish hospital in Warsaw (on Czyste) had had 1,490 beds before the war; it had employed 147 doctors, 59 students of medicine as assistants, 119 nurses, 13 bacteriologists, and 6 pharmacists. Moreover, there were three isolation wards with 1,800 beds. This hospital, which had been built through the strenuous efforts of the Jewish public, and, before the war, had been taken over by the city government, was seized

[4] Society for Protection of the Health of the Jewish Population; known in Poland as TOZ.

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by the German occupants. A small, badly organized and poorly equipped hospital, with hardly 180 beds in it, was left to the half million Jews of the city. In other cities it is even worse, and the old Jewish *hekdesh,* a house that indiscriminately shelters the poor and the sick, must replace modern hospitals. It is hardly possible to take care of patients in crowded little rooms.

Death, indeed, has been exacting a disastrous toll. Following are the statistics of mortality, computed from the number of funerals made public. Only numbers concerning Warsaw and Lublin are available for the time being, but they are illustrative of the other ghettos. In May, 1941, 2,061 died in the Warsaw ghetto, in June the number of funerals reached 4,290. In the following months the number kept rising. Before the war, the rate of mortality of the Jewish population of Warsaw (about 370,000) was 400 per month at the most. This means that death is taking 15 to 20 times as many victims as before the war. The mortality among children is particularly appalling. It reached up to 70% in the only Jewish children's hospital that is left in Warsaw (it had 220 beds before the war). This infanticide we shall never forget! During July, August and the first half of September, 1941, the Nazis gave almost no medical supplies to the ghetto, because "Jews are immune from contagious diseases."

The Food Situation

As may be expected, there are fixed food rations for the population of Nazified Poland. Food is supplied only against rationing cards. It is difficult to say what people actually get now since the quantities are constantly being changed, almost every fortnight. Weeks pass when nothing is distributed. Furthermore, the rations are constantly being cut in two ways—first, the amount is lessened, second, the number of varieties is decreased. But there is an established principle, regardless of the amounts or varieties: Poles receive one half of what Germans get, while Jews for some time were allowed two thirds of the Poles' ration; now they only get one half. At that, all publications of the *Polish* underground movement speak of complete hunger in workers' homes, and urgently call for food. We can imagine how large the food rations of the *Jewish* population are. It is easy to see, therefore, why scores, if not hundreds, of private letters carry a passionate plea for bread.

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Let me quote Vilna as an example. Immediately after occupying this city at the end of June, 1941, the Nazis assigned the following food rations to the inhabitants (in the very beginning the rations are always somewhat more generous): for Poles, 375 grams [13 ozs.] of meat, 200 grams [6 ozs.] of butter, and 2 kilograms 800 grams [6 lbs. 3 ozs.] of bread, weekly. And these, to be sure, are no supplements to other foods; this is all. Jews were allowed one half of this. In areas long occupied, the rations are shorter.

This, for one thing, is certain: the Jewish population in the ghettos has not received any butter or meat since August, 1941. In order to buy milk one must present a certificate of a doctor confirming tuberculosis. Then adults get one glass daily, children one and a half glasses.

We have the following reliable report of October, 1941: a Pole gets 500 calories of food daily—far below any recognized minimum; a Jew gets much less. When this is compared with pre-war prices, it appears that a Pole gets 40 groszy worth of food daily, a Jew—15 groszy worth. Remember that, prior to the war, 1 kilogram of black bread cost 20 groszy, 1 kilogram of butter 3 zlotys, and 1 kilogram of sugar—1 zloty.

Certainly some products can be purchased at the "black market"; but prices are extremely high. One must pay for 1 kilogram of bread with his wages of three or four days' work, and 1 kilogram of meat is worth 15 days' labor.

This is why the relief work which is being carried on by the *Judenräte* with the considerable support of the American Joint Distribution Committee, and the health protection program of the TOZ, are so tremendously important. It is learned that approximately 260 thousand adults were fed in the public kitchens, *i.e.* they got meals consisting of soup and bread. In addition, the TOZ reports that in September, 1941, 331,535 children received one meal a day. We hear from Częstochowa that in June, 1940, the Jewish community council gave 124,000 free meals and 13,000 paid ones; in July 148,000 free and 14,000 paid meals were distributed. In Cracow 10,000 Jews ate in the public kitchens during November, 1939. It is reported from Tomaszów Mazowiecki that their community council fed 2,300 people daily during August, 1940. These are, of course, only tiny fragments of the great relief work. Do not think that this work is mainly due to the efforts of American Jewry. 80%

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of the relief activities are rendered possible by the tormented Jewish population itself. This fact cannot be emphasized too strongly.

We cannot ascertain how much the suffering was eased by the food parcels forwarded from different countries, but they have, no doubt, brought some consolation and cheer.

Until recently, Polish workers or peasants used to deliver furtively some food stuffs to the ghetto at low prices. The Nazis looked on with fury, but apparently had difficulty in discovering the "criminals." I quote the Nazi paper published in Częstochowa, *Gazeta Częstochowska,* of July 3, 1941: "The cases multiply, when Polish peasants, impelled by dangerous sympathy for the Jewish rabble, smuggle products into the ghetto and sell them at even cheaper prices than to their own Polish brethren. Such persons are warned of severe measures against them." Such appeals, however, seem to have been of little avail, for in Number 2 of the Bulletin issued by the Polish Consulate in New York (of January 9, 1942) we are told of special regulations according to which illegal delivery of food is punishable by death. On this basis the two Barański brothers of Wieluń have been sentenced to death in Lodz.

I avoid any appraisal, any word of characterization. What can words express, however strong and poignant?

How Jews Make a Living

As the situation clarifies itself, we begin to see how the Jewish population carries on. Certainly life is an agony, but people *are* still living. By "clarifies", we refer to the moment when the lawlessness began to be stabilized.

When the Germans came, there was complete lawlessness; a human life was not worth a farthing. Whoever left his house was not certain to return. People were attacked and dragged to work, where they were beaten and tortured, sometimes kept for days without food. The Nazi brigands made a sport of beating Jews, even women, whom they met in the streets. Thousands of people were kidnaped and were never heard from since. There is no telling, but thousands certainly perished this way. Nightly searches, accompanied by looting, were another method of terrorism. Apartments were emptied, not a stool was left, only the injured, insulted owners within the bare walls. This chapter of Jewish life has yet to be written. Before the materials are

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gathered it is difficult to portray these hundred days of complete lawlessness.

A second period followed. The absolute licentiousness was legalized and then enforced in the strict German way. From then on, every looting and murder was backed by a decree or a so-called law. The object now was economic annihilation of Polish Jewry. All property was actually robbed by orders of the authorities; merchandise was confiscated.[5]

Let us now see how the three main social strata of the Jewish populace support themselves.

(1) Jewish BUSINESS is in ruins. The ghetto has severed the connections between the Jewish dealer and his non-Jewish customer. The Jewish customer, in turn, is thoroughly impoverished, and what is more important—the dealer has no merchandise left. Only remnants of Jewish business in the form of small groceries still exist. There one can get his meager portion against a ration card. These stores

[5] A decree of January 24, 1940, ordered Jewish property registered with the authorities under penalty of fine or imprisonment as specified: bank accounts in Poland and abroad, including debts; inheritances, stocks, bonds, real estate, mortgages, merchandise, vehicles (motor and horse cars), cash, jewelry, gold, silver, rings, earrings, watches, furniture, pictures, household items, clothes, and objects of personal use.

Jews in Warsaw Harnessed by Nazi Soldiers to a Truck in Place of Horses

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are not even open for a whole day. And still another field is left—selling in the streets or in gateways old clothes, shoes, or anything else that can still be found in the households. There is also the "black market" for foodstuffs.

(2) PROFESSIONS. There is a great deal of work, although few earnings, in only one of the liberal professions: medicine. The Chief of the Health Office for the Government General, Dr. Walbaum, decreed in the beginning of March, 1940, that Jews could consult only Jewish physicians, and that the latter were not allowed to treat non-Jews. The pretext was set forth that contagious diseases were most common among the Jews and that Jews were more resistant to such diseases, especially spotted fever and typhus. The former Polish authorities, it was stated, had failed to prevent the Jews from spreading disease among Poles; the present decree was intended for the good of the Polish population.

Many Jewish physicians are rendering considerable public services. They actually sacrifice themselves to save the health and lives of the ghetto inhabitants.

Lawyers are completely declassed. They have no right to appear in Polish or German courts; the only miserable field left for them are the Jewish courts of the *Judenräte*. Thus they live in utter distress.

Nor are the engineers any better off. Only a few are employed at draining swamps, at forest work, etc. The fate of the other people of liberal professions is easy to conceive.

(3) ARTISANS and WORKERS. The only people who are occupied to some degree are workers and artisans. There are three ways of employment.

In October, 1939, a registration of the whole Jewish population between the ages of 14 and 60 took place. All were to be taken to forced labor. A decree of Governor General Frank of October, 1939 reads as follows: ". . . Jewish inhabitants are immediately subject to forced labor. For that purpose Jews will be recruited into labor battalions." The pertinent regulations were to be issued by the S. S. and the police, who had the right to designate areas east of the Vistula where this decree was not to be effective.

This fiendish plan has never been fully enforced. However, forced labor remained. There is a great deal of information concerning the labor camps until Summer, 1941. It is hard to say how many

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Jews have toiled in these camps. We do know, however, that the *Judenräte* had to supply certain numbers of laborers every day.

We know, for example, that in the beginning of August, 1940, more than 10,000 Jews worked in the Lublin district at regulating river shores and draining swamps. They were divided into 29 labor camps. Along with them worked 1,500 skilled Polish working men, all under the supervision of a German gang. They had to stand 12-15 hours a day immersed in mud up to their knees, and afterwards perform barbarous "exercises." The Warsaw community council had to supply the camps with 8,000 workers daily. 3,500 Jews labored near the camps of Biała Podlaska. A large Jewish labor camp existed in Lipie, near Nowy Sącz, in Summer, 1940. 600 Jews from Tarnów, Nowy Sącz, Rzeszów and adjoining towns constructed a road from Zbyszyce to Rożnowo. They worked ten hours a day for a meager keep and daily wages of 1 zloty. They were supervised by Germans, while their foremen were Poles. The project had been contracted by a German construction firm. From Tarnów Jews were sent to two more camps. In Dębice, 500 Jews from Tarnów were employed. In Jedlanka, 32 kilometers [20 miles] from Radom, Jews from that town drained swamps in 1940. In that year the Łowicz community council sent 500 Jews for forced labor in regulating the shores of the Bzura River. In Fall, 1940, 300 Jews came daily from Będzin for public works. At the same time the Germans registered all healthy male Jews in the Zagłębie region, in order to dispatch them for labor in Upper Silesia.

In Summer, 1940, the Cracow Jewish *kehile* had to supply about 3,000 workers a day. At the same time the *kehile* introduced compulsory service for girls from 18 to 24; they were sent chiefly to farm work. The decree about forced labor referred to all Jews, men and women, from 16 to 60; for money one could have a substitute sent.

Since the personnel was shifted, we may safely conclude that Jews in the hundreds of thousands had to endure this anguish of the labor camps. In some places the workers received 4 zlotys a day. But they were also to get their keep from their German contractors. So during the summer of 1941 the camps were partly disbanded, for the employers could not feed the workers. The gravity of the conditions in the camps may be inferred from the fact that the *Judenrat* of Warsaw risked to request the German authorities to limit the rights of the guards over the laborers. But despite these conditions and the scanty

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wages, thousands of workers enlisted and waited for their turns to be sent to labor camps.

The second kind of work are the workshops, where orders which the community council receives from the German Labor Office are filled. There the wages, food and treatment are much better. The Jewish Artisans' Association has by decree of the authorities been converted into a compulsory organization; the fees are 2 zlotys a month, and 50 groszy a month in addition for every employed worker. We do not know how many artisans and workers have employment, but let us look at a few reports in the *Gazeta Żydowska.* The town of Brzeziny is famous as a tailoring center. Prior to the war it manufactured trousers which were exported even to England. An account in the *Gazeta Żydowska* states that all tailors there are employed and new tailors are wanted. In a report of May 10, 1941, the *Gazeta Żydowska* tells that "the Labor Department of the Warsaw community council is looking for 200 paid workers to work some distance from Warsaw." A different report of the same month states: "The Director of the German Labor Office in Warsaw has announced that he is looking for several thousand Jewish workers. He promises wages according to the prevailing standard, good food and proper treatment." On June 27 the same paper reports from Cracow: "All skilled workers of the building trades, bricklayers, gas workers, electricians, tinsmiths, locksmiths, carpenters are employed. The season for mens' tailors, dressmakers, capmakers has begun. A shortage of labor is foreseen." Other issues of the paper carry news from Lodz that a special commission has departed for Warsaw to register workers from various trades. The Łowicz community council had to supply the Germans with 80 skilled tailors, shoemakers, etc. In Otwock, a resort for consumptives, 4,000 Jews were registered in the labor battalion in the beginning of 1941. Not all could work, though, for many conscripted turned out to be sick. For that reason the number of actual workers dropped to relatively few.

It should be stressed that the Nazis have banned any rise in prices for labor compared to the pre-war rate, although all prices of commodities have climbed startlingly. For Jewish workers a rate has been established which is much lower than that of the Poles, since "Jews need less than Poles." We see now how small are the earnings of those who work. Still it is obvious that the working people, in a psychological sense, constitute the healthiest section of Polish Jewry,

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though we must keep in mind the mental state of the workers who realize that their toil and sweat goes to equip their oppressor.

Recently working cards were issued which are the prerequisite for getting employment. So far, Jews have not received such cards.

In summer 1940, the Warsaw community council opened courses for locksmiths, building workers and electrical mechanics.

The third category of work are producers' cooperatives. The Warsaw community council, for example, maintains a tailor shop of 900 workers, shoemaking shops with 500, and a hosiery shop of 200 workers. The Jewish Artisans' Association has a hosiery cooperative in which 3,000 workers are employed. Similar reports come from Cracow, where 150 tailors work in cooperative tailoring establishments. In Kielce, the cooperative of gaiter makers has 60 workers. In Pabianice, near Lodz, more than 1,000 workers have employment in sewing workshops.

We do not know accurately what the wages in the cooperatives are. At any rate, they are much higher than in the other working institutions. An August, 1940, issue of the *Gazeta Żydowska* tells that the workers employed in the cooperatives receive daily two plates of soup for 70 groszy, and half a kilogram of bread weekly for 35 groszy; some earn up to 100-180 zlotys a week.

We discover the first relatively detailed report on Lodz (which the Nazis have named Litzmannstadt) in an article in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* of August 15, 1941:

> The textile industry is most important, but by no means the sole factor in the economic life of Litzmannstadt. Jews are also a great factor today. They are assembled in the barren district of the ghetto, which is tightly isolated by a fence 2.4 kilometers [1.3 miles] long. There are also textile factories inside the ghetto. Jews earn a living by manufacturing the most varied articles. The *Judenrat* forwards the products to the City Ghetto Office. Of the nearly 200,000 Jews who live in the ghetto, fully 7,000 are tailors, and 1,000 are carpenters; they are employed at useful work. Jews also work at the highway.

The agricultural settlements (*kibbutzim*) in Grochów, Częstochowa and Będzin have been reestablished. New settlements have been founded in different places.

According to the computations of Summer, 1941, the feeding of the Jewish population costs 12,600,000 zlotys monthly. In order to cover this amount, 63,000 workers with an average income of 8

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zlotys a day must be employed. In reality, the workers who are employed at the moment could secure only 20% or 25% of the sums required.

Schools

One of the most important problems is the bringing-up of the younger generation. The question of schools has therefore been an urgent one since the early days of the occupation. During the first months of chaos, when the Polish school boards were still functioning, the Jewish school system existed for a short time. The teachers devotedly tried to keep alive the Jewish schools. Many particulars cannot yet be revealed.

Then the Nazis closed both Polish and Jewish schools. For months hundreds of thousands of children loitered in the streets, exposed to complete demoralization. The Polish elementary schools reopened in the beginning of 1941. All high schools, colleges and universities had been liquidated with the explanation that a people of peasants needs no education higher than elementary schooling.

The Jewish schools were to remain closed under the excuse of epidemics. It is reliably reported, however, that the teachers of the Yiddish schools did take up their work with the children again. Possibly other school systems also carried on, but I have no information about them. On August 30, 1941, a decree "regarding the Jewish schools in the Government General" was issued. The decree reads as follows:

> The *Judenrat* of every community is the institution for Jewish schools. It is the duty of these *Räte* to provide schools for the Jews. For this purpose they are to found and support the necessary number of elementary schools. They may also open vocational and trade schools. Moreover, the *Judenräte* are to provide for the education and training of the teachers of the schools it supports. *The schools supported by the Judenrat are private.* Jews may *attend only schools which are supported by the Judenrat.* School attendance is compulsory according to the general Polish school regulations.
>
> In order to pay for the Jewish schools, the Director of the Department of Science, Education and Popular Enlightenment, may, in agreement with the Director of the Trustee Department of the Government General, transfer to the *Judenrat* for the fulfillment of its duties, the confiscated Jewish property which had served to support Jewish educational institutions before the present decree went into effect. The Jewish school system is subject to the supervision of the German school authorities. On order of the District Chief smaller communities,

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which are unable to support schools on their own, may collaborate with each other in matters of schooling.

No schools could yet be opened, since the executive regulations had to be awaited. They were not issued until Spring, 1941. Reportedly, last Summer a number of schools under the name of the *Judenrat* were opened. Instruction is given in Yiddish. The schools still cover only a small number of the children, not because money for the teachers' wages was short; most teachers did not ask for any financial assurances. It was school buildings that were lacking.

We have an interesting, rather extensive description of how schools are faring in Radom. The School Committee of the *Judenrat* had been organized as early as September, 1940. School buildings and money were lacking. In September all teachers were registered, in October there was a registration of all children of school age. Only 2,000 children reported, since their parents had to contribute some money for the schools; the estimated number of school children was 4,000. The first school was established in the building of the community council where a religious *talmud tora* was located prior to the war. At the time of the report (March, 1941) the permission to start was expected any day. There would be three shifts, from 8 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. The expenses would be covered by as small a fee as possible: the more wealthy were to contribute more, the surplus being used to feed the children. All instruction would be given in Yiddish.

> . . . All difficulties in obtaining textbooks have been removed by the permission of the local representative of the District Chief to purchase Yiddish books and to sell them at a designated place. In exceptionally difficult cases it has been decided to use a mimeograph. By collaboration between the School Committee and the Department of Schools, the outlines of education have been drawn. The education is to be in a Jewish national spirit. . . .

Let us once more recall the distress of the children in the ghettos. In Warsaw alone ten thousand desolate children from other cities, who have lost their parents, lie around in the streets; they rummage the lots for hours, trying to find something to eat. The welfare institutions, in their courageous efforts to provide for these children, are unable to improve conditions materially.

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The Organization of Jewish Life

In all cities with a Jewish population *Judenräte,* or *Aeltestenräte,* as they are sometimes called, are functioning. The first decree on this matter was issued on November 28, 1939, the executive regulations on June 7, 1940. The *Judenräte* officially represent the Jewish population. It is with them that the Nazi command confers, and through them that it makes public its orders. The *Judenäte* are appointed by the occupants. It was reported in the press that in Summer, 1940, "elections" for the community council were ordered in Nowy Sącz. Only one list of candidates was submitted, and it was accepted by the commissar.

The *Judenräte* have ample authority delegated to them. They are in charge of the food distribution, they establish workshops and they have the executive power over the Jewish population. Whether one is a Jew or not is determined by a decree similar to the Nuremberg Laws.[6] The *Judenrat* may impose taxes on the Jews. It also maintains a court for financial disputes among Jews. In Cracow, the Jewish community council, in view of its numerous new functions, was ordered to change its name from "Jewish Religious *Kehile*" to just "Jewish *Kehile*"; as a matter of fact, the *kehile* was relieved from its religious functions altogether, since ritual slaughter has been prohibited and all Jewish prayerhouses in Cracow have been closed.

In some places, the *Judenräte* are composed of people of rather questionable standards, but these cases are rare exceptions.

The occupation Government is trying to seize everything. On November 20, 1939, Governor General Frank promulgated a decree on pensions for war invalids; Jews were explicitly exempted. By an order of March 7, 1940, Jewish workers and clerks have to join the Sick Fund along with Christians, but they can enjoy only medical aid; they are not entitled to sick benefits or to invalids' pensions. Against this background, one is even more impressed by the activities of the Jewish Welfare Board (*Yidishe Sotsyale Zelbsthilf*), the aim of which is to uphold the Jewish population physically and spiritually.

During the first half year of occupation (perhaps as early as in 1939) a committee was created which was to coordinate the existing relief organizations in Warsaw: Central Committee to Aid the Jews

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[6] Particulars appeared in the decree of July 24, 1940.

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of Warsaw, CENTOS[7], TOZ, United Committee for the Problems of Jewish Artisans, Jewish Rescue Committee, Jewish Society for the Protection of Youth, Childrens' Friends Association, Drop of Milk, etc. Relief was given primarily to the refugees and the homeless. In Summer, 1940, the Coordination Committee was reorganized and transformed into the "Jewish Welfare Board" with departments for finances, collection of clothes, emergency cases, hygiene, lodgings for the homeless. Moreover, house committees are in operation with which the Welfare Board is connected. In Summer, 1940, 2,200 house committees were operative in Warsaw, with a total membership of ten thousand. In the country, delegates of the Welfare Board were appointed with the permission of the authorities in each district.

On June 27, 1940, the Governor General imposed a general levy on the population for welfare purposes—not for Jews, but for the Poles and partly for the German Winter Help. After a year of attempts the Jews at last succeeded in getting a share.

The Jewish Welfare Board draws its income from (a) the sums it receives from the *Judenrat,* and (b) from voluntary contributions.

Both the scope of work and the great accomplishments of the agency indicate that the prisoners of the ghetto possess an amazing feeling of responsibility and they give away the last bit. Let us quote a fact like this: the Jewish Welfare Board proclaimed a "spoon drive", *i.e.* its delegates went into each house for spoonfuls of flour, barley or vegetables. Not a single household, it is reported, however distressed, failed to contribute. Another example: since it is almost impossible to obtain coal (1 ton of coal costs 1,000 zlotys), the Welfare Board has appealed to the population to heat only one room in each building, and to place there all the children thereof. The adults should apportion the day among themselves, each one getting a definite hour to warm himself. We are told in private letters how every inch of sleeping space is shared. This is not mere generosity or philanthropy, it is a mighty, powerful will of a solid group to endure, to avoid disintegration.

The Welfare Board, although subject to the *Judenrat,* the president of which is responsible for it, is an autonomous organization. Beginning with September, 1940, its center has been located in Cracow.

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[7] Society for the Protection of Orphans.

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At the end of 1939, the *kehile* of Sosnowiec received instructions from the Germans to organize the Jewish *kehiles* of the whole region. In 1940 the "Center of Jewish Communities in Upper Silesia" was created.

Let us examine the budget of a community council. We have some data on the Warsaw community. In normal times, the budget of the Warsaw *kehile* varied from 3 to 4 million zlotys a year. During the first half of 1940 the expenditure of the Warsaw *Judenrat* amounted to 4,300,000 zl., of which 1,425,000 zl. were spent on the labor battalion (the community council paid 25% of the workers' wages), 1,350,000 zl. on hospitals, 415,000 zl. for executing the decrees of the authorities (registration, erecting the ghetto walls, etc.), 325,000 zl. on welfare, etc. The income for the first six months of 1940 consisted of: community taxes, charity contributions, fees for the labor battalion (the wealthy could hire substitutes)—1,900,000 zl., burial ground on the cemetery—800,000 zl. Thus the *Judenrat* had a deficit of 1,600,000 zl. in six months. In pre-war budgets, 34% of the total used to be sent on schools; no such item appears in the budget with which we are now concerned.

The president of the Warsaw *Judenrat* submitted to the German commissar a budget for the half year between April 1 and September 30, 1941, which provides for an expenditure of 24,451,800 zl. and a revenue of 16,979,100 zl. Unfortunately, the report does not go into details.

The functions of the *Judenrat* even include the mail. The number of officials testifies to the scope of its work. The Warsaw council now has about 5,000 officials, the Lublin council—600.

A Jewish police force is active in the area of the Warsaw ghetto. It consists of a thousand unarmed policemen. Their duty is to enforce general order and to carry out the orders of the German authorities, however cruel. Naturally, the Jewish population sometimes looks at the policemen with great resentment.

The existence of a Jewish police is also reported from a number of other localities.

Since the outbreak of the German-Soviet war, an air-raid precaution force has been set up in Warsaw; no details are available.

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Expulsions; Refugees

The wave of expulsions from individual towns has not yet stopped. No exact details can be given on localities from which the Jews have been expelled. From nearly 30 cities and towns Jews have been driven out by special decree. Furthermore, there were two wholesale expulsions. In August, 1940, the Cracow *kehile* had to issue a decree forbidding Jews to live along the railroads from Rzeszów to Przemyśl, Kalwaria to Zakopane, Chabówka to Nowy Sącz, Jasło to Nowy Zagórz, Prezeworsk to Dynowo, Nowy Sącz to Krynica, Tarnobrzeg to Przeworsk, Sucha to Nowy Targ, Cracow to Dulowa. The ban concerns more than 70 localities. In the first half of 1941 all Jews were expelled from the Warsaw area west of the Vistula; this decree affected scores of thousands of Jews, according to some computations fully seventy thousand. The most atrocious expulsion known was from Suwałki, while the greatest one was from Cracow, whence 50,000 Jews had been driven out by April 27, 1941.[8] We do not know how many Jews have been exiled. Suffice it to say that in the second half of 1941, 70,000 Jews were transferred to Warsaw alone (this number possibly includes some Czech and Austrian Jews). All expulsions were carried out with merciless suddenness. The notices served were from two weeks to six hours.

Thus the Jewish population of Poland has an internal refugee problem of its own affecting hundreds of thousands. It is almost impossible to provide for the refugees. In Piotrków, for example, where there had been 11,217 Jews before the war, 10,535 resident Jews and 3,625 refugees were counted on June 1, 1940. Only some of them could be given private lodgings; the others slept in the two synagogues and in a gymnasium. In Kosów Łódzki there were 2,000 Jews in Summer, 1940; among them 700 refugees. In some places the refugees outnumber the pre-war residents (Tarnów, Skierniewice, etc.) The expulsions were another attempt to uproot and disperse the Jewish population.

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[8] During the expulsion from Cracow a poll of Cracow Jews was taken. Among the 25,523 adults who on June 1, 1940, were gainfully employed, there were registered 10,338 artisans (chiefly in textile and clothes, also in metal, food and building trades). Nearly 30% were employed in business, 22% in the professions, 7% in non-skilled work.

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Transportation

On January 26, 1940, Governor General Frank published a decree barring Jews from the use of railroads. This did not concern trips ordered in writing by the authorities. Violators were subject to penalties in the way of fine and imprisonment. On March 15, 1941, another decree of the Governor General was promulgated: Jews are not allowed to travel by railroad or other land communications used for public passenger traffic, without explicit individual permits; they are forbidden to use any public water communications except ferries. As for local means of transportation, as streetcars, buses, taxi cabs, horse cabs, and sleighs of public ownership, the local District Chiefs (*Kreishauptmann, Starosta*) are to decide. It is also up to the District Chiefs to issue the transportation permits required.

In Piotrków, in 1940, 10 horse cabs designated by a *Mogen Dovid* (hexagram) were allowed for Jews. On August 21, 1940, special carriages for Jews were introduced in the streetcars and suburban electrical railroads of Warsaw. In Cracow, Jews have been forbidden to ride city railroads and buses, as well as private taxis, since April 3, 1941.

When we add these facts to the restrictions on leaving even those localities where no formal ghettos have been established, we can conceive of the degree of serfdom to which the Jews have been reduced.

In Polish districts traffic is to stop at 11 p.m.; in the ghettos it was originally allowed until 9 p.m., and lately only until 7 p.m. In some ghettos even gas or electric lights are to be turned out after 7 p. m. In some streets of Warsaw passages between buildings have been dug through which one house may communicate with the other.

Let us look for a minute at a Warsaw street. A recent letter from the underground movement reads as follows:

> . . . in addition, the incessant vexations by the German gendarmes. These guards are placed at the corners of border streets. The Jews must pass the guards with uncovered heads. For instance, from Plac Grzybowski to Karmelicka, one has to walk for some distance along Żelazna and Chłodna with his bared head. One must take off one's hat at Żelazna and go over to Chłodna that way, and then one must put it on again at Żelazna. The same thing is repeated at Lezno and Żelazna, since Żelazna is a thoroughfare connecting the Grzybów quarter with Leszno, Karmelicka and Zamenhofa.

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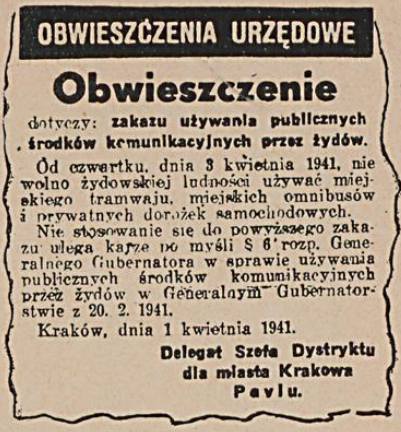


OBWIESZCZENIA URZĘDOWE

Obwieszczenie

dotyczy: **zakazu używania publicznych środków komunikacyjnych przez żydów.**

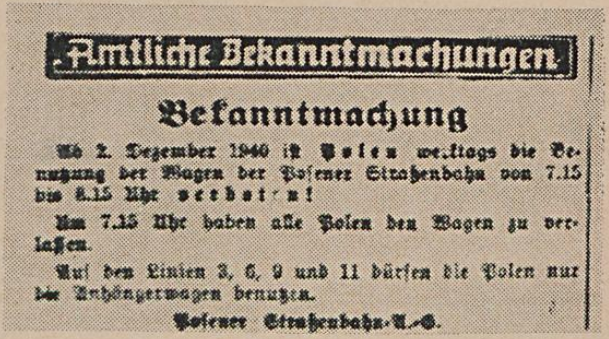
Od czwartku, dnia 3 kwietnia 1941, nie wolno żydowskiej ludności używać miejskiego tramwaju, miejskich omnibusów i prywatnych dorożek samochodowych.

Nie stosowanie się do powyższego zakazu ulega karze po myśli § 6 rozp. Generalnego Gubernatora w sprawie używania publicznych środków komunikacyjnych przez żydów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie z 20. 2. 1941.

Kraków, dnia 1 kwietnia 1941.

Delegat Szefa Dystryktu dla miasta Krakowa
Pavlu.

An Official Notice in a Cracow Newspaper Forbidding Jews to Use Public Conveyances



Amtliche Bekanntmachungen

Bekanntmachung

Ab 2. Dezember 1940 ist Polen werktags die Benutzung der Wagen der Posener Straßenbahn von 7.15 bis 8.15 Uhr verboten!

Um 7.15 Uhr haben alle Polen den Wagen zu verlassen.

Auf den Linien 3, 6, 9 und 11 dürfen die Polen nur die Anhängewagen benutzen.

Posener Straßenbahn A.-G.

An Official Notice in a Poznan Newspaper Forbidding Poles to Use Streetcars

Tens of thousands of people flow through this street, not only on the sidewalks but also in the driveway. The picture of thousands of Jews running bareheaded from Chłodna, or waiting in crowds for the signal to pass, cuts into one's heart.

A private letter recounts the following:

I visit my old parents every day, because it gives them so much joy. But how hard it is to get there. Imagine—the walk from Smocza to Pańska now takes several hours, while it previously took 20 minutes, or 5 minutes by street car. One is pushed around in the crowd, and one must waste four hours for a two-way trip. I always return soaked with sweat.

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"JEWS — LICE — SPOTTED FEVER"

A Nazi Poster in Polish

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Atrocities

The ban on ritual slaughter was issued on October 26, 1939. The Nazi official, in a sudden attack of clemency, writes as follows:

> Every form of animal torture is prohibited. Thus I am henceforth banning ritual slaughter, *i. e.,* the painful killing of cattle by slow extraction of blood in order to obtain *kosher* meat. Penalty: imprisonment, not less than a year.

On October 3, 1940, the first day of the Jewish New Year, the Cracow *kehile* isued an announcement which stated:

> By order of the authorities, all Jewish men and women, without exception, must work as usual on October 4th (the second day of *Rosh Hashone* [Jewish New Year]), and October 12th (*Yom Kippur*). All Jewish stores must be open and functioning.

Later the authorities, in a statement to the *Judenrat,* gave the following interpretation: Jews employed in German enterprises must work as usual on the Jewish holidays. Jewish stores may close, except when food distribution is involved. Jews may pray collectively in private apartments, avoiding crowds and excessively loud prayer. In the beginning of November, 1940, the Germans announced in Warsaw that on account of epidemics Jews should abstain from praying collectively; both the organizers and the participants would be subject to penalties.

The Nazis offend the Jews in every way possible. On meeting a German in uniform, a Jew must "in a conspicuous and obvious manner make way and, if necessary, step down from the sidewalk." In the Polish districts of Warsaw posters were exhibited with the slogan: "JEWS—LICE—SPOTTED FEVER." This, incidentally, is part of a widespread and systematic anti-Jewish campaign which the German authorities are conducting among the Poles.

Jewish Cultural Activities

In view of the cited facts, the craving for cultural expression among the ghettoized Jews sounds like a fairy-tale. Word reaches us about the ways in which tribute was paid to the memory of two great Jewish writers. On the 105th birthday of Mendele Moykher Sforim scores of meetings took place. To honor the 25th anniversary of the death of Peretz, hundreds of young Jewish workers assembled at the grave of this great inspiring personality. After many attempts, 24 Jewish libraries and bookstores were permitted to open. Thousands

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of adolescents and adults rushed for the books. Soon the stocks were exhausted. From other towns book orders streamed in, but the Germans would not permit the delivery. Four Yiddish theatres are functioning in Warsaw, and they are nearly always filled. In some, operettas and smaller shows are given, others specialize in drama. Thus *Di Klatche* by Mendele Moykher Sforim was dramatized, *Shmates* by Leivick was presented, and *Motke Ganev* by Sholem Asch is being prepared. There were memorial meetings in honor of Jehuda Halevi, Ch. N. Bialik, Nathan Birnbaum. Choruses of children and young people were organized, different courses of study were opened. Plans were even undertaken for the publication of an underground literary magazine. These are only fragments that reached us. Yet they are proof that the spirit, the will to persist, has not been crushed.

The Underground Movement

Almost since the very beginning of the German occupation the Jewish underground mass movement has been active. According to its last report, it has adopted the following aims:

1. To strengthen the endurance of the Jewish masses and their power of resistance to the unparalleled, ruthless persecutions which have no precedent in human history. One source of defense against the spiritual breakdown is the fact that Hitlerism is carrying on its destructive work against the Polish people, too, and that all of Europe is exposed to its policy of depravation and extermination.
2. To keep the Jewish population informed of the resistance to and the struggle with the occupant, both in the areas of Poland that are outside the ghettos, and in the subdued countries in general.
3. To inculcate a strong faith that, although the Jewish masses are being persecuted, the majority will survive to see the final defeat of the enemy.

These tasks are being performed with self-sacrifice beyond belief. Nearly 60 cities and towns are connected under a central leadership. Instructors move from town to town risking their lives. Two weekly magazines for adults and special underground journals for the young are published. Every day words of encouragement are poured into the hearts of the disheartened. A strong, organized power is being forged for the hour of victory.

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No one can get through the ghetto wall; but Jewish and Polish working men have dug an underground connection and have shaken hands. Together they are arming against their common foe.

The Polish people is undergoing a terrible trial. In times like these the dregs of Polish society can be and are used as a murderous tool against the Jews. But the backbone of the Polish people, the workers, the peasants and large parts of the intelligentsia, who have already sacrificed so much to the bloodthirsty occupant, are daily becoming more conscious of their community of fate with the Jewish population. We can see this from the numerous underground publications in Poland which so forcibly express their indignation against the heinous crime of erecting the ghetto.

Only a few words more in conclusion.

Over there in the ghettos of Poland we are witnessing the truly amazing phenomenon of a people's fortitude which has no parallel in history, and of an underground movement, the heroism of which illuminates the darkness of our days. How dare anyone give up European Jewry for lost? They of the ghettos, in their agony and firmness, are our pride and our hope. Some day the war will be over, the slaughter will cease. And then, when the walls of the ghetto will be razed, we shall behold the pallid faces of the ghetto inhabitants. But their eyes will gleam. He errs who thinks that then the Jews in *America* will be the rich ones and they—the poor. It is *they* who will be spiritually rich, while we shall in reverence beg them for the privilege to join them in their struggle to restore life on their soil, in their homes.

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THE YIDDISH SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTE—YIVO, Inc.

The Institution for Research and Training in the Domain of Jewish Social Studies

The Yiddish Scientific Institute was established in 1925 in Vilna, Poland, for the scientific study of Jewish life throughout the world with particular emphasis on its sociological aspects. At the outbreak of the present war the center of the Institute was transferred to New York, where an American branch had already been in existence, and the work has been continued here.

The Yivo has four research sections: for history, economics and statistics, psychology and education, language and literature. Each section publishes monographs and collections of studies from time to time. Besides these, three periodicals are published: *Yivo Bleter,* a bi-monthly in which papers of all sections are presented; *Di Yidishe Shprakh,* a non-technical bi-monthly, devoted to the problems of standard Yiddish; *Yidishe Visnshaft,* recording developments in all fields of Jewish research, scheduled to begin publication in the spring of 1942. To date, a total of nearly 35,00 pages of research studies have been published.

The Yivo maintains a Research Training Division (*Aspirantur*) to give college graduates the opportunity to serve a research apprenticeship in association with mature scholars. Fellowships with a stipend of $300 a year each are awarded. A Junior Training Department (*Proaspirantur*) is attached to this division.

The Central Jewish Library and Archives of the Yivo in New York has by now over 20,000 catalogue entries, excluding periodicals, pamphlets and leaflets.

The income of the Institute is derived from membership dues and voluntary contributions.

Privileges of Membership: Members paying ten dollars a year or more receive: (1) *Yivo Bleter*; (2) one of the books issued during the year; (3) all other publications of the Institute at reduced prices. Members paying five dollars a year receive: (1) *Yivo Bleter*; (2) all other Institute publications at reduced prices.

Yearly subscriptions to *Yidishe Shprakh* and *Yidishe Visnshaft* —one dollar each.

Yiddish Scientific Institute
425 Lafayette Street
New York, N. Y.

T 85 125 532

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